



## Project Northland

Project Northland is a multilevel, multiyear program proven to delay the age at which young people begin drinking, reduce alcohol use among those who have already tried drinking, and limit the number of alcohol-related problems of young drinkers. Designed for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students (10 to 14 years old), Project Northland addresses both individual behavioral change and environmental change. Project Northland also strives to change how parents communicate with their children, how peers influence each other, and how communities respond to young adolescent alcohol use.

Components include:

- Parent involvement and education programs
- Behavioral curricula
- Peer participation
- Community activities

Each intervention year has an overall theme and is tailored to the developmental level of the young adolescent. Alcohol is the focus of the Project Northland program because it is American teenagers' drug of choice and inflicts the greatest harm among youth.

### TARGET POPULATION

Project Northland is designed to provide state-of-the-art alcohol use prevention materials for students in grades six through eight. The original evaluation involved approximately 2,400 students from 24 school districts in northeastern Minnesota. This largely rural area is one of the U.S. communities rated highest for alcohol-related problems. A replication of the Project Northland study is currently underway in a major city.



### Proven Results\*

- Alcohol and cigarette use was 27% lower in the intervention group
- Students who never drank at the beginning of the sixth grade smoked 37% fewer cigarettes and used 50% less marijuana at the end of eighth grade
- The intervention group felt less peer pressure to use alcohol
- Better parent-child communication about the consequences of alcohol use

*\*Relative to the control group.*

### INTERVENTION

**Universal**

Selective

Indicated

HERE'S PROOF PREVENTION WORKS

## OUTCOMES

Project Northland sustained widespread participation in the program, including 3 years of curricula implementation in all intervention schools, parent participation in alcohol education activities, and participation by nearly half of the students in peer-planned alcohol-free activities outside of school. Relative to controls, Northland participants:

- Drank significantly less at the end of eighth grade
- Were significantly less likely to be users of both alcohol and cigarettes at the end of the eighth grade

Project Northland was effective in changing peer influence to use alcohol, normative expectations about how many young people drink, and parent-child communication about the consequences of alcohol use and the reasons for not using alcohol.

## BENEFITS

- Teaches youth decisionmaking skills
- Assists in strengthening parenting skills
- Teaches youth interpersonal skills
- Provides information on substances of abuse

## HOW IT WORKS

Project Northland consists of four components:

- **Slick Tracy Home Team** has sixth grade students and their parents complete fun and educational activities at home. This “home team” approach provides a forum for the students and their families to discuss alcohol-related issues using the Slick Tracy comic book series.
- **Amazing Alternatives!** provides curriculum for eight 45-minute sessions of teacher- and peer-led classroom sessions. It is designed to teach seventh graders the skills to identify and resist influences to use alcohol and to encourage alcohol-free alternatives.
- **PowerLines** features eight 45-minute sessions that are part of a 4-week program for eighth grade students. It teaches students how communities influence behavior and how they can create changes in communities.
- **Supercharged** includes strategies that worked in Project Northland communities and provides schools with materials and a framework that can help them get parents and communities involved.

## IMPLEMENTATION ESSENTIALS

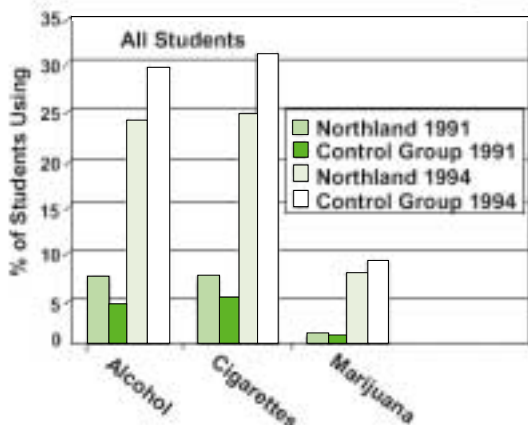
Successful replication of the Project Northland model requires:

- Student involvement from sixth through eighth grades
- Teacher and peer training (recommended to maintain implementation fidelity)
- Incorporation of peer-selected peer leaders at all three grade levels
- A community member task force

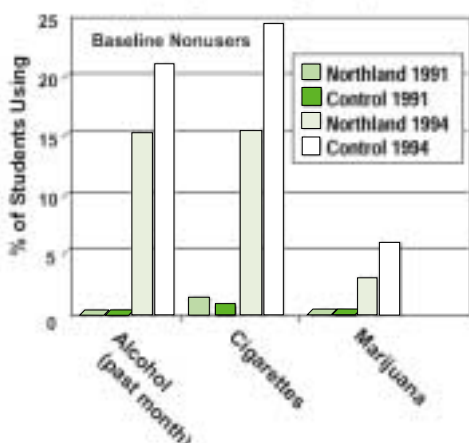
### Training and Technical Assistance

Project Northland, through Hazelden Information and Educational Services, can provide training of teachers and community coordina-

Project Northland Alcohol and Other Drug Use Outcomes  
(Fall 1991 6th graders to followup Spring 1994, 8th graders)



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tors based on local needs. Training can be conducted for one grade level each year or for all three grade levels at once. Hazelden also offers evaluation services.

### Program Materials and Resources

The following materials are available from Hazelden:

- **Slick Tracy Home Team** (Sixth Grade)—includes 1 teacher’s manual, 30 sets of 4 comic books, 30 envelopes, and 1 poster
- **Amazing Alternatives!** (Seventh Grade)—includes one teacher’s manual, four cassette tapes, one blackboard game, and two posters
- **PowerLines** (Eighth Grade)—includes one teacher’s manual and one cassette tape
- **Supercharged**—a manual that presents successful strategies for getting parents and communities involved in youth alcohol use prevention (includes the Community Night Game Pack)
- **Project Northland Complete Set**—includes one each of the three grade-level programs, as well as the ancillary products

### Timeline

- Training for each program requires 3 days except for Supercharged, which requires 4 days. A 1-day leadership training session is also held for peer leaders. Project Northland can be conducted anytime during the school year, but should be conducted every year at the same time. The sixth grade program requires 4 consecutive weeks of homework activity with parents, and a “Slick Tracy Family Fun Night” evening event. Programs for grades seven and eight each run for eight classroom sessions, with an additional one-time theater production for the eighth grade program.

## PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Project Northland was developed at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health, Division of Epidemiology, and evaluated with a grant from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). The evaluation was the largest and most rigorous alcohol use prevention trial ever funded by NIAAA, and Project Northland was shown to be effective in delaying and reducing alcohol use among young adolescents. After the initial evaluation, the program underwent extensive pilot testing in a comparable Minnesota community, and revisions were made prior to implementation.

## Target Areas

### Protective Factors To Increase

#### Individual

- Problem-solving skills
- Social competence and cooperation
- Attachment to parents and other caring adults
- Belief in society’s values

#### Family

- Frequent and consistent communication with parents
- Presence of a significant adult
- Strong parental guidance
- Parent involvement in homework and school-related activities

#### Peer

- Responsible behavior modeled by peer group or peer leader
- Association with peers involved in school, recreation, service, religion, or other organized activities

#### School

- Sense of community in classroom
- Clear standards and rules for appropriate behavior
- Youth participation, involvement, and responsibility in school tasks
- School bonding

#### Community

- Caring and support from community
- Opportunities for youth to participate in community activities

#### Society

- Media literacy

### Risk Factors To Decrease

#### Individual

- Inadequate life skills
- Weak peer-refusal skills
- Favorable attitudes toward alcohol use
- Lack of school bonding

#### Family

- Family attitudes favor alcohol use
- Poor child supervision and discipline
- Inconsistent rules and consequences related to alcohol use

#### School

- Inconsistent rules and consequences related to alcohol use
- Lack of school bonding
- Favorable staff and student attitudes toward alcohol use

#### Peer

- Association with delinquent peers and peers who reject mainstream activities
- Susceptibility to negative peer pressure

#### Community

- Community disorganization
- Lack of community bonding
- Community attitudes favorable to alcohol use
- Inadequate youth services and opportunity for youth involvement in community

#### Society

- Pro-alcohol use messages in the media

## EVALUATION DESIGN

The Project Northland evaluation involved approximately 2,400 students from 24 school districts in northeastern Minnesota during their sixth, seventh, and eighth grade years (1991 to 1994), and included children from seven area American Indian reservations. This area has the highest rate of alcohol-related problems in the State.

Twenty-four school districts were recruited systematically and four smaller school districts were combined with nearby districts to ensure an adequate sample size in each unit to be randomized. These combined districts were blocked by size and randomized to an intervention condition (n=10) or a reference condition (n=10). The population of the six participating counties was 235,000; 94 percent of the students were Caucasian, while American Indian students constituted about 5.5 percent of the study's cohort. Because of their small number, analyses of intervention effects within this subgroup were not possible. This area is predominately rural, and lower-middle class to middle class. (See *Outcomes* for details.)

## PROGRAM DEVELOPER

The University of Minnesota, School of Public Health, Division of Epidemiology, in 1991, was awarded a grant from NIAAA to develop Project Northland. Through the research and development of this program, developers were able to successfully link and study behavioral curricula in schools, parental involvement, extracurricular peer leadership, and community-wide efforts for the prevention of adolescent alcohol use.

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## RECOGNITION

Model Program—Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

Exemplary Program—U.S. Department of Education

Rated "A"—Drug Strategies, Making the Grade

Promising Program—Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention